



Off the Trailer

Economy class – with extras



Bayliner's versatile, family-friendly Flight bowrider comes with new watersports features and bold graphics.

By Graham Lloyd

With consumer demand in recent years being at best subdued following various financial challenges around the world, Bayliner has focussed on smaller and more affordable craft, with this 175 Flight being a perfect example.

Even in the good ol' days, when buoyant markets had Bayliner and other boat builders producing a wide range of boats well up into the luxury cruiser category, Bayliner was very good at also making simple and safe family boats. Many a time I've turned up to review an 'entry level'

Bayliner expecting it to be rather mundane, only to be pleasantly surprised at how well the boat performed.

While there are plenty of specialist boats around for serious watersports enthusiasts, many families just want to be able to 'have a go' without dedicating the whole boat, and their whole budget, to the sporting side. For such boaters, Bayliner has introduced the Flight series, which ranges from this 5.33m 175 (17.5ft) up to 23-footers in its Deck Boat line-up.



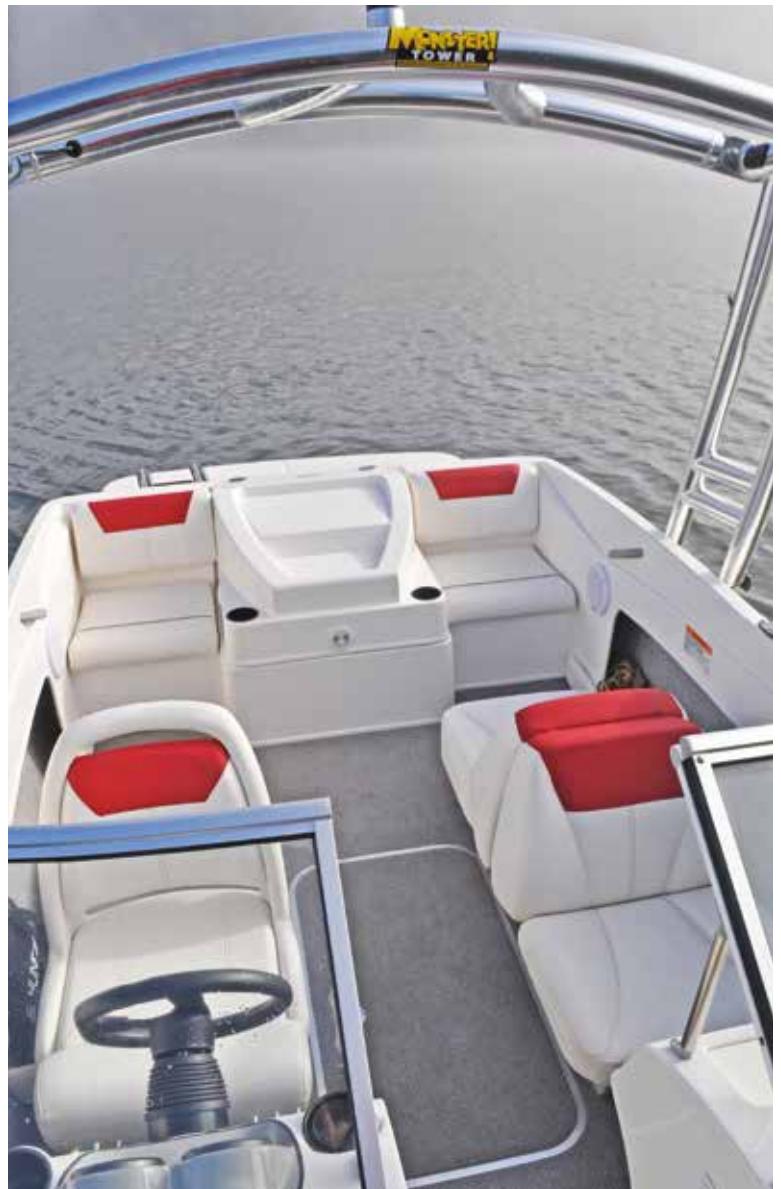
For the Flight designation, Bayliner has fitted its bowrider design with suitable power, a wakeboarding tower and special graphics, and packaged it ready-to-go with a trailer, safety gear (according to individual state/territory law) and registration ... a very attractive proposition with its \$38,990 value-for-money price tag.

Club Marine took a closer look at the 175 on the gloriously scenic Berowra Waters, part of the mighty Hawkesbury River waterway on Sydney's northern outskirts.

Dominating the boat is the twin-framed forward-curving tower, held in place by secure mounts on the outer-tops of the hull sides. The mounting system allows for the tower to be easily hinged down for reduced storage height.

Perhaps emphasising that the Flight is not for hard-core wakeboarders, the 175 is powered by a





It's a good example of not judging performance just on specifications ...

Previous page top: Spacious and effective, the interior of the 175 Flight includes a helm position that skippers will find a delight to use.

Previous page bottom: An extended swim platform augments the above-transom boarding platform to provide lots of room for watersports, or to just cool off on sunny days.

Above: Rated to tow 181kg, the 'Monster' tower uses polished alloy tubing for strength. It can be hinged down for less storage height.

TIP-TOP FIT-OUT

The engine is housed beneath a stylish, heavily sound-proofed cover hinged on gas-assist struts. The top is shaped to provide a non-skid surface to reach the boarding platform. There's also a neat

recess at the front to hold nibbles or other bits and pieces, while drinkholders are on either side.

Comfortably cushioned quarter seats feature a stowage compartment on one side, while the other cushion lifts to reveal a solid surface that would be useful as a step to the back of the boat. There's a full-beam boarding platform across the transom and a further swim platform extending aft with a drop-down swim ladder.

The cockpit has small side pockets for stowage plus a large under-floor compartment for bulky items. On the port side is a back-to-back seating arrangement, with the aft-facing seat good for observing. The forward-facing first-mate seat is provided with a glovebox, grabhandle and drinkholder. These seats fold down into a single sunlounger.

Bayliner uses top-quality marine vinyls for upholstery and trim panels, and the 175 Flight's cockpit floor has a premium carpet that's permanently secured rather than being clip-out, so it looks a bit neater.

The bowrider cockpit has the usual side seats, with lift-off seat cushions that cover stowage areas. In front of the windscreens, upholstered backrests make it comfortable to ride facing forwards, and there's enough leg room over the non-skid floor to sit facing inwards. There are drinkholders and grabhandles, too.

There's no anchor locker as such, but one of the two side lockers would be quite suitable to hold your ground tackle. A small combined navigation light is at the stem but, surprisingly, there are no cleats or bollards for tying off an anchor line. It would be easy enough to fit one though, and there are cleats amidships on the topsides, as well as on the transom quarters, for securing docking lines.

The driving position seats the skipper relatively low in the boat, but that doesn't affect good vision in all directions. A tilt-adjustable wheel can be set to suit individual preference, giving clear sight of the gauges in the neat dash panel. The seat is adjustable, too, and it's comfortable, although not offering all that much lateral support and there's no flip-up bolster. On the other hand, my legs had a perfect reach for my feet to brace against an angled footrest in the recess under the dash console.

A non-glare grey moulding houses the gauge cluster, with two large circular dials for tacho and



... anyone who goes boating for the sheer fun of driving will like this one.

speedo and various inset analogue dials. It's quite a simple gauge arrangement, but it works really well. Small banks of switches are to either side of the wheel, with the stereo controls to the right.

ENERGETIC

The 175 Flight leapt away from rest with more sprightly energy than anticipated. It's a good example of not judging performance on specifications alone – the 135hp MerCruiser is well-matched to the hull and it must have had an ideal prop choice, for the performance was better than the power level would indicate.

The prop worked perfectly in turns, too, as even tight turns yielded pleasing results, with the hull spearing around in excellent fashion. The Flight was not sensitive to trim, but the usual approach of trim-in for initial launch and then trim-out for optimum ride angle worked effectively. The hull's running surfaces gave a soft ride through wakes and washes and kept the boat feeling alive for the driver, while retaining a comfy, safe attitude for the crew.

Happy cruise speeds were anywhere from 3000rpm and around 21.6 knots (40km/h) through to 4000rpm for 29.7 knots (55km/h). Top speed was 38 knots (70.5km/h) at 5000rpm. Those are good performance figures, especially as the MerCruiser was brand new and still needed a final tune. There are no other engine options, so Bayliner must be very happy with the way this model Merc

fits the bill for the 175 Flight. I think it will prove a great balance of power and economy for the boat.

The steering is quite light, with just under three turns lock-to-lock – anyone who goes boating for the sheer fun of driving will like this one. Plus, it's a great overall set-up for anything you'd like to do on the water, especially watersports. For anglers, the tower might get in the way of rod action, but it's a good fishing rig for handlines, too, with plenty of room to move about. And at that price, this boat is hard to resist. 

SPECIFICATIONS: BAYLINER 175 FLIGHT

Length (overall):	5.33m
Beam:	2.11m
Draft:	0.91m
Deadrise:	19 degrees
Weight:	872kg
Towing weight:	1087kg
Fuel capacity:	79.5lt
Power:	MerCruiser 3.0 TKS 3lt four-cylinder (101kw/135hp)
Price:	\$38,990 including trailer and registration

Test boat provided by: Avante Marine Silverwater. Tel: (02) 9737 0727 or go to: avantemarine.com.au or bayliner.com.au.

PREMIUM xtra

Subscribers please note: For additional content or video footage go to: clubmarine.com.au.

With its special graphics and stylish, dominating watersports tower, the Bayliner 175 Flight makes an impressive sight.